DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 091 375 SP 008 050

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TITLE Chicano Cultural Diversity: Implications for CBTE.
PUB DATE May 74
NOTE 24p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *Cultural Differences; *Cultural Factors; *Cultural Pluralism; Educational Environment; *Mexican Americans; Objectives; *Performance Based Teacher Education; Performance Factors

ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the competencies that teachers need in working with Chicano children by describing the culture filter concept, discussing cultural pluralism, and stressing the importance of a competency-based teacher education (CBTE) program specifically relating to the Chicano. The culture filter concept suggests using knowledge of cultural factors to arrange an environment where children perceive themselves positively to enhance learning. The discussion on cultural pluralism emphasizes the differences within a cultural group and suggests that the teachers focus on the needs of each subgroup. Next, the importance of CBTE programs in the education of Chicanos is stressed. Requirements to prepare candidates to teach effectively in a culturally diverse society and illustrative performance objectives for CBTE candidates are presented. The author concludes that cultural differences can hinder learning when the conditions do not accommodate those differences. Therefore, teachers need those competencies which will enable them to understand and utilize aspects of cultural diversity which will increase changes of success for the learner. A 13-item bibliography is included. (PD)

ED 091375

CHICANO CULTURAL DIVERSITY

IMPLICATIONS FOR CBTE

BY

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MAY 1974

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To be or not to be competent is certainly not the question. Even people who have doubts about Competency Based Teacher Education programs would probably agree that the process of education should result in changes in the student which, if they are to be assessed, must be observable. The professor of chemistry who is involved with the education of engineers certainly demands that students be able to perform certain tasks or solve given problems. This ability is not only seen as a necessary exit skill from the course, but also as a basis for the competence that the engineer will demonstrate when putting his knowledge into use.

Likewise, the professor of English insists on performance in order to assess the skill with which a student can analyze a literary work or produce an essay. Those who would employ the product of such a class would look for some evidence of competence in order to select the person who would best fit their needs.

Consider the professor of sociology who must inculcate in his students skills and attitudes necessary for their performance as social workers. The focus would certainly be on the question of what the graduates would be able to do. Will they be reasonably successful? Can the success be related to specific competencies developed and demonstrated during their training period? Success during the training period should certainly be measured by what the student can do rather than by what he took.

The focus of this paper is on the competencies that teachers should demonstrate in preparation for working with Chicano children. However, before attention can be given to that focus, it is imperative that reasons be established for seeing the Chicano learner as having special needs. These special needs must be seen as arising from the influences of a culture that is different from that which permeates the typical school and those who teach in it. The person who will be successful in teaching Chicanos must have all the skills developed through a good Competency Based Teacher Education program and more. The more is related to those skills which are heavily influenced by the cultural differences that the child brings to school and which affect the ways in which he perceives his environment.

It is interesting to find that at the turn of the century, the noted structuralist, E. B. Titchener (1) stressed the need for ethnic psychology. He included language, myth, custom, and art as the important components of culture which set groups apart from each other. Although his brand of structuralism lost its influence with the advent of functionalism and behaviorism, his awareness that cultural differences were of importance to the psychologist as well as to other social scientists was significant. He stated, "The collective mind has no existence apart from the separate members of the community. But when many individual minds come into contact, new complex processes take shape; the elementary processes

are put together as they would not have been had mankind lived solitary lives. The problem of ethnic psychology, then, is to trace the development of these new mental complexes, and explain them by reference to the conditions of social living."

If the child brings with him different ways of perceiving and responding which are influenced by his cultural differences, then the teacher must behave in ways which accommodate and enhance a different learning style. Ramirez (2) applied Witkin's concept of field dependence-independence to a study of cognitive styles of Mexican-American children to determine some of the strategies that teachers should use in response to cultural differences. Wagner (3) also studied cognitive styles using Witkin's model as well as others.

In this paper, the concept of the "culture filter" or screen is introduced in an effort to simplify the discussion of learning styles. If teachers need to consider who the learner is from a cultural perspective, then the concept of cultural differences needs to be investigated. The discussion of cultural pluralism which follows serves to point out the danger of having a convenient slogan which can serve to categorize the Chicano as a monolithic entity who possesses uniform, discernable cultural traits. Pluralism is viewed in a broader sense to include vast differences which exist within the Mexican-American group.

Finally, the importance of Competency Based Teacher Education

programs in the eucation of all children and specifically the Chicano is stressed. Recommendations as to desirable competencies to b developed conclude the paper.

A View of Learning Through a Culture Filter

In numerous conferences and in-service meetings teachers have asked whether the Chicano children they teach learn in ways which are different from those of other children. The question elicits interesting responses which range from the implausible "all children are alike" to the equally untenable conclusion that Chicanos learn in some peculiar way. If the question were put to researchers on human learning, what would be the response? The person whose bias rests with operant conditioning would probably insist that Chicanos learn through reinforcement and that behavior modification techniques can be just as effective with Chicanos as with other children. Someone calling himself a humanistic psychologist would respond that Chicanos, like other people, have a basic drive toward health and actualization (4) and that by providing an environment where the individual will perceive himself in a positive way and will have the opportunity to develop his own uniqueness, the needs of the Chicano students will be met. Instructional theory, emanating from humanistic psychology would therefore accommodate the "learning styles" of Chicanos.

Likewise, those interested in cognitive construct approaches to instruction would say that the Chicano student, like any other, should be considered as a person who actively selects and interprets certain signals from his environment and, in fact becomes a processor of information in keeping with his own individual differences.

If theories and paradigms for explanation of the learning process make no distinction in the way that Chicanos learn, then does it follow that the education of teachers who will teach Chicanos requires no differentiation? It is a fact that the majority of teachers presently engaged in teaching Chicanos did not have an education program which was different from the regular program that all teaching candidates had to complete. It is also a fact that the education of Chicanos, when measured with the traditional tools and procedures, has been less effective than that of their Angle counterparts. Data on achievement levels, dropouts, and other indicators show that the Chicano student has not fared very well. (5) It might even be accurate to conclude that the teacher versed in learning theory, whether of a distinct orientation or an eclectic, has failed to be productive in the education of Chicanos.

If Chicanos indeed learn through operant conditioning just like anybody else, it would be helpful to view the process through a culture filter. If the teacher who uses behavior modification knows things about the Chicano learners that are different from his own experience

or the experience of other identifiable groups, then perhaps this information can be put to effective use in the implementation of the technique. For example, if the teacher is aware of unique non-verbal signals of Chicano culture, recognizes potential reinforcers that are culturally unique, or realizes that there might be conditions such as overly competitive situations where the student would tend to withdraw rather than be engaged in a culturally uncomfortable situation. Similarly, the person with the humanistic bent would profit greatly from understanding the uniqueness of Chicano children through knowledge of aspects of their culture. The use of this knowledge to arrange an environment where children would perceive themselves in a positive way would indeed enhance learning. If the child's cultural differences are respected as worthy by the school, then the child sees part of himself, part of his existence, as being good.

Cultural Pluralism

Cultural pluralism is a term used as an antithesis to the melting pot. The need to respect diverse cultures is a familiar theme in the literature on the education of ethnic minorities. This emphasis has served a purpose by focusing on the reality that there is nothing un-American in being different. That, in fact, diversity is very American. Like many good things, however, the focus on cultural pluralism contains the danger that it can be reduced to a popular slogan which is

convenient in rhetoric but which lacks the clarity to make it operational. perhaps the biggest danger to this positive concept is the urge to categorize and classify, to sort and to pigeonhole. Writers allude to the Chicano Culture as if it were a set of values and customs possessed by all who are categorized as Chicanos or Mexican-Americans. Romano(6) protests the use of such convenient labeling stating:

> "The Indianistic views, the Confrontationist Philosophy, and Cultural Nationalism with its Meztizaje-based Humanistic Universalism, Behavioral Relativism and Existentialism, when related to the types of people who have immigrated from Mexico, those born in the United States, as well as people of Mexican descent who were residents in conquered western lands, all give some glimmer of the complexity of this population, especially when one views it internally from the perspective of multiple philosophies regarding the existence and nature of Mexican-American man. For, in truth, just as el puro Mexicano does not exist, neither does the pure Mexican-American despite the massive efforts by social scientists to fabricate such a mythical being under the monolithic label of traditional culture rather than the more realistic concept of multiple histories and philosophies."

That cultural differences exist among groups is not a debatable question. What does leave ample room for argument is the suggestion that everyone named García, Hernández, Gómez, or Solís somehow posseses some uniform cultural differences which must be considered by the teacher in providing better instruction. One author spent much time emphasizing the reality of diversity among people identified as Mexican-American and then proceeded to generalize about their "learning styles". This fallacy serves to create the new stereotype which is found in the completion of the statement Mexican-American children are.....

Teachers faced with the grim reality that the education of Chicanos has been inadequate at best, are quick to accept children as "elements of sociological categories rather than as individual learners; socializing them, in effect, in terms of those categories (ethnically and culturally) rather than educating them." (7) One document designed to help teachers understand Mexican-American children and their families is entitled "Characteristic Traits of Hispanic Persons" (8). It breaks down such concepts as passion, individualism, and humanism and makes such statements as, "There is a marked tendency among Spanish speaking peoples to move forward with their back to the future, this is caused by being oriented to a present-past relationship in which the future does not figure in their thinking." The author goes on to explain that this condition is also very much part of the Indian culture and probably resulted from the inbreeding between Spaniards and Indians. He continues, "This is why you will find, when traveling in Latin America, that distances along the highway are given from the point of departure and not to the point ahead." Other statements geared to help the teacher understand and educate Mexican-American students are, "Hispanic people are well known for their courtesy, but not for their observance of the law" and "Individualism causes the Spanish persons to be particularly deficient on those qualities which are based on collective standards." With generalizations like these it is easy to understand how educational deficiencies can be attributed to the culture.

A recent entry in the competition for the language arts textbook adoption in California (9) epitomizes the new stereotype of the Chicano. Although the author chooses to call the people described in the text "Mexican", the reference is to barrio culture in the United States. This act of preferring to use Mexican is the type of fantasizing which Cortes (10) describes as the process of picking up a "frozen village culture" from remote area of Mexico and transplating it to Southern California--and declaring that it is alive and well! The generalizations in Tradition in the Barrio (9) are static, frozen, wishful statements which fit Carter's (11) description of the noble savage approach. They don't deal with the dynamic nature of culture but rather give a distorted view for teachers to use in, once again, completing the statement, "Mexican-American children are.....".

The new stereotype is, of course, a rebuttal to the old stereotype which attached negative attributes to Mexican-Americans. Universal positive attributes have been substituted for universal bad ones. In writing about the compensatory education model, Carter (11) states, "In order to determine the causative differences or deficiencies, studies have been conducted of Mexican-American homes, children and life styles. The conclusions of these studies, while often confusing and contradictory, provide a generalized or stereotyped description of Mexican-American culture and personality characteristics". On the one hand some people are busy trying to classify, sort and label Chicano Culture in order to

overcome some of the deprivation that hinders school progress. On the other hand are Chicanos themselves eager to give the Anglo a generalized, static, description of Chicano Culture romantic in nature and unreal at best. Neither effort serves to improve the education of Chicanos in the school. The first apologizes for differences and seeks to overcome them in order to enhance school progress. The second provides for the new stereotype which does not allow for the vast differences that exist within the group. Romano (5) offers four broad categories which serve to emphasize the cultural diversity within the group. These differences emerge from the different ways in which people or Mexican descent have had to adjust to life in the United States. Those who have embraced Anglo-Saxon Conformity, have forgotten their cultural past and embraced the ways of the dominant society while at the same time rejecting the culture and heritage that was Mexican. The cultural differences of children from these families will include little more than a Spanish surname if, indeed, it hasn't been changed. Contrast this group with people described as having Stabilized Differences, who have immigrated from Mexico in the last 50 years, and are found in pockets, colonias, barrios, where they maintain the basic ways and traditions which are based on the "multiple histories and philosophies from which they came"(6). The subgroups of this category differ throughout the Southwest but the Spanish language, existing in a variety of dialects, is a common feature along with traditional food. This is the setting that

probably spawns the urge to classify all Mexican-Americans as being from a "folk culture". In reality they represent different areas of Mexico and to identify them as one is to deny that differences exist among the inhabitants of Mexico. The simplicity of describing all as members of that "frozen village culture" that has been transplanted north of the border is a convenience to be ill-afforded in understanding cultural pluralism. It would be wrong to view children of this group as growing up in a static environment because they grow up interacting with the "old ways" which are Mexican and with many facets of the dominant Angle society. The teacher who stereotypes this group might find that the Chicano music preferred by the young is not all traditional but rather the country western sounds of Johnny Rodriguez or the exciting rock beat of El Chicano and Santana.

Mexican-Americans who can be described as in a state of Re-Aligned Pluralism are those who have taken up the ways of the dominant society but have found it necessary to establish activities and institutions that are ethnically oriented and paralell to those of the dominat society. The phenomenon of the third generation return is common within this category. A recent article by United Press International (32) serves to illustrate the outcome of efforts to set up parallel activities and institutions. The title of the article proclaims, Albuquerque--Chicano Nashville and goes on to tell how Chicano musicians and artists have formed corporations to control their own creations and promote their music.

The final group described by Romano is called Bicultural and is composed of individuals who can function equally well in both cultures. There is hope that effective ethnic studies and bilingual cross-cultural programs in the schools will produce more people who can be called bicultural.

These categories, though admittedly broad, serve to illustrate the differences and dynamics of the people who are too often seen as a monolithic group with a uniform set of values and customs called the Mexican-American or Chicano culture. Romano's (6) observation that all of the categories can often be observed in a single Mexican-American family further emphasizes its dynamic nature.

Cultural pluralism, then, is not a concept that applies only to the differences between the teacher and the child when one of them is Anglo and the other Mexican-American, but also to the pluralistic aspects of the Mexican-American culture. What are the specific cultural differences that the teacher should look for and understand in order to act in ways that accommodate the culturally different? Some differences such as language are obvious but are not always treated in ways that show sensitivity. The monolingual (Spanish) child who finds himself in an English language environment needs to have a very real cultural difference accommodated. The sensitive teacher arranges a learning environment where the child feels good about the way the language he brings to school is accepted, and the ways in which the new language is made part of his instruction. There are many gradations of language difference. The example of the

Spanish monolingual indicates a very definte cultural difference; however, there are many other language differences which are not as readily identified. The child who appears to speak more English than Spanish might have very specific needs which the teacher must recognize and which require as much attention and sensitivity as those of the monolingual. Beyond the obvious difference of language, people are often hardpressed to be specific about other cultural differences. In a recent meeting between interested Chicano parents and teachers who were seeking ways to implement a more effective program for their students, the parents pointed out that the teachers should be aware of and understand the Chicano culture. Aside from the obvious difference of language, the group had difficulty identifying other salient aspects. Unfortunately the next step in such situations is to begin to cite examples that run the danger of creating the stereotypes that provide the patent answers for working with Chicano students:

> "The Chicanito doesn't pay attention to female teachers because he is taught to be muy macho."
>
> "The Chicano child, as a sign of respect, will always bow his head while being reprimanded."

While both of the statements might be accurate in certain situations with certain children, the teacher must be able to recognize when such influences are really affecting the behavior of the child and proceed to act in ways which accommodate the differences. Cultural differences therefore, should be construed as those characteristics which cause a student to act

or react in ways different from the responses commonly anticipated by the institution. If the five elements of culture as listed by Aragon (13) language, diet, costuming, social patterns and ethics, are considered, the teacher can have a framework through which to assess differences that exist in the child's home and community environment.

If the children come from a barrio where Stabilized Differences are evident, then the chances that Spanish monolinguals will be coming to kindergarten is more probable. Diet differences might also be more pronounced, so that while discussing the nutritional qualities of "a good breakfast" at school, the teacher needs to be aware that the ingredients suggested by the National Dairy Council in its colorful posters might not be relevant nor desirable for a Chicano child. A teacher complained recently that he hadn't been able to find calorie counters that included some of the more traditional Mexican foods so that his Junior High class could evaluate caloric content of their diets. To the extent that diets would be different, the school should accept and build upon those differences.

Costuming can become an important expression of cultural differences which can occur in subtle and often unrecognized ways. If the teacher is looking for sombreros, sarapes, and huaraches, he might miss a pattern of dress or body adornment which has become an expression of identity in the barrio and which if understood and accepted by the school, will enhance the learning conditions for the student.

Social patterns such as the extended family, machismo, carnalismo,

and patriarchy must be understood and seen as appearing in different ways and in different degrees depending on the setting. A common complaint of parents is that the traditional social amenities stressed in some homes are not reinforced by the school. Of particular confusion to a child who comes from an environment where the Usted form is used in addressing adults, and the terms Don and Doña are ways of showing respect, is the situation where the young teacher greets her children by saying, "Hi kids, I'm your teacher and I want you to call me Melanie".

Expressions of the ethics of a culture are simple to document when observing the Tasadays of the Phillipines but much more complex in the dynamic culture of the Mexican-American. Aragon (13) mentions nepotism as a concept that is rejected by the American but seen as a positive thing by the Chicano because "you trust the person you love". La Mordida is something that few Chicanos would attempt with American officials but which many use with cultural gusto when traveling in Mexico.

Cultural differences that need the attention and sensitivity of the teacher are going to come with individuals. Sometimes there will be several students with the same needs. The important thing is for the teacher to help protect individuality through recognition and acceptance of cultural differences. The teacher should be aware of those instances when the student is acting or reacting in ways that were not anticipated. It is at this time that intervention can prove helpful because the student's chances of success are improved and the feeling that someone cares is fostered.

Interviews with Chicano parents reveal that they are very interested in the performance of their children in school and they trust the teacher to exhibit certain behaviors that will get children to learn. The following letter was sent home by a teacher:

Dear Mrs. Sanchez:

Ramon can't talk too well in English. He is having a great deal of trouble with his addition combinations, and his reading is very much below grade level.

I hope you can come and see me.

Miss Hewitt

A scribbled note came back:

Dear Miss Hewitt:

I know what you say about Ramon is true. That's why i send him to school.

Mrs. Sanchez

Parents are basically performance oriented. They want their children to be able to do things.

Relevancy of CBTE

Competancy Based Teacher Education is indeed a cause for hope and optimism that the education of all teachers will be improved. The shift in emphasis from requiring a student to complete a series of courses to requiring instead the acquisition of specific exit skills is indeed a positive move. The opening paragraphs of this paper were slightly magnanimous in describing actual conditions in college courses. Although people in the disciplines require performance in tests and other instruments to measure student progress, the concept of a competency based course or program is still foreign to many and somehow sounds mechanistic and rigid when, in reality, it allows for flexibility and innovation. Perhaps the greatest beneficiaries of CBTE will be the culturally different children because teachers educated on the basis of specific competancies will most likely be specific in identifying the exit skills they expect from their students. Hopefully they will be less likely to consider the differences that children bring to school as being liabilities to the learning process.

The Program

It was stated earlier that the teacher of the culturally different must have all of the competencies developed through a good teacher education program and more. The greatest portion of this paper has been devoted to the definition of "more" as the knowledge of cultural differences that the child might bring to school and the sensitivity

good judgement, and skill to use that knowledge for the benefit of the child. Competencies for being an effective teacher of Chicanos should not be thought of as being a completely different set of behaviors designed only for teaching them. Rather they need to be behaviors that are flexible enough to allow for and, in fact, promote cultural diversity in the teaching-learning act. The teacher needs to make use of the "culture filter" to begin to see the situation as the student sees it and to modify conditions to enhance learning.

To prepare candidates to be effective teachers in a culturally diverse society, the program should include requirements such as these:

1. Require competencies in teacher-pupil interaction as well as in fostering conditions that promote pupil-pupil interaction. Require the student (teacher) to focus on cultural differences that might inhibit participation.

2. Require competency in arranging a learning environment designed to accomplish specific instructional objectives. Have the student demonstrate how the needs of the learners will be met and indicate the flexibility of the arrangement to accommodate individual differences.

3. Require competency in developing instructional units which focus on a culturally diverse society but which do not result in an "ethnic lunch" curriculum. Require candidates to

demonstrate how current curriculum materials can be augmented to include themes of cultural diversity (particularly social studies and language arts materials) Require student-teaching in a multicultural setting where the candidate can evaluate himself as well as be evaluated.

4. Require competency in conversational Spanish that prepares the candidate to understand the spoken Spanish of the area and to be understood while speaking it.

5. Require competency in recognizing non verbal signals that are different from his own

6. Require that students understand and can demonstrate that instruction in a culturally diverse setting and about a culturally diverse society should not be determined by "peddlers of ethnic packages" or by those who promote the "piñata making, let's have tacos" syndrome.

7. Require specific knowledge of the Indian-Spanish-Mexican-Chicano heritage of the southwest and demonstrate an ability to include alternative perspectives where other points of view or historical facts have been omitted.

Illustrative Performance Objectives for Candidates of CBTE

1. Demonstrate an ability to assess his own cultural orientation and biases by describing his feelings toward concepts like cooperation, competition, family, loyalty, respect, etc. Compare and contrast his feelings with those of members of his family or friends who appear to think as he does.

2. Identify settings which tend to restrict his full participation because his cultural orientation runs counter to the viewpoints and behaviors required for full enjoyment.

   Note: My wife had just informed me that she feels very uncomfortable at Greek dances to which we are invited because once the dancing begins, you're expected to participate.

3. Investigate cultural characteristics that are attributed to Chicanos. Select two or three of these that a child could conceivably bring to school, then identify an instructional setting where conflict might arise. Describe how you would accomodate the child's differences and still attain the instructional objective.

4. Assuming that you have a group of Chicano students in your class, describe how you would find out as much as possible about their home and community environment--without becoming obnoxious in doing so. What would you want to know before starting to ask questions?

5. Describe a situation where a Chicano child is having difficulty and identify as many factors as you can which could be contributing to his lack of success. List all of the factors that the child might be injecting into the situation and describe the adjustments that could be made to increase chances of success.

Summary Statement

From the viewpoint of human learning, Chicanos learn like anyone else; however, cultural differences can hinder learning when the conditions do not accommodate those differences. The teacher should therefore be able to understand and utilize aspects of cultural diversity which will increase chances of success for the learner. The teacher should perceive cultural pluralism in ways that don't stereotype groups as having uniform characteristics. Differences within the group called Chicano or Mexican-American are broad and varied.

Competency Based Teacher Education is important to Chicanos because of its focus on performance. The lack of school success for Chicanos has traditionally been attributed to cultural differences. Teachers trained in specific competencies will be better able to accomodate those differences and enhance the chances for success.

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